

THE MATHEMATICIAN.

"A GLORIOUS morning, Hassell," said a spruce middle-aged man, as he walked up one side of the old square of Furnival's Inn, with a small valise under his arm, to a short, pale, elderly gentleman, who was listlessly strolling, in a morning-gown, slippers, and velvet cap, on the opposite pathway, and in a contrary direction; "a glorious morning as ever was seen—bright, clear, but by no means sultry: an excellent morning, I protest, and just to my taste."

"Why, sir," replied the pale old gentleman, "I must say it's fine country weather; and, I dare swear, delightful to you, who are just on the brink of quitting the miserable metropolis until the morrow of All Souls."

"No, no," interrupted the first speaker, in a brisk tone, "I shall only be away a month; Trout and Thomas is appointed at bar only in the term, and I must be home after the first three days of pheasant shooting to marshal my evidence. I've a *subpena duces tecum* to produce the papers in Wagstaff's commission at the Cornwall assizes; that carries me clear to Bodmin: and I am going on a visit to an old client, who lives but eleven miles further; so that the costs out of pocket of my autumnal rustication, this year, will be but a flea-bite."

"Ah! thou'rt a fortunate fellow," said Hassell, with a sigh; "here have I been tied by the leg ever since Trinity term, with annoyances growing out of Joshua Kesterton's will; and fine weather makes me rabid, because I can't go into the country to employ it. Adam Burdock and I will now be the only two principals left in the Inn, except bed-ridden Bailey and poor mad Royston."

"Burdock does not ruralize, I believe."

"Not he: and if he had a mind so to do, he couldn't now; for he's shackled with the same case as myself."

"But can't you meet each other half way, and close it at once?"

"Impossible: it's such an Augean stable, that a regiment of attorneys, with a legal Hercules at their head, could not do the needful in a night. We can't get at the facts—at least we could not until within these few days; and the results of our investigations are so unexpected and staggering, that Adam and I, and, indeed, all parties concerned, are well-nigh paralysed. Such a case has not come under my cognizance for years: if you were not in such a hurry, I'd surprise you."

"I'm not pressed—not at all. I share a chaise with another witness who picks me up in his way from the city; so I have only to keep my eye on the gates: pray step across."

"No, hang it! the sun shines there; see how it exposes the clefts and time-worn face of the building, so that the entire side of the Inn looks as though it were in the last stage of decrepitude: it even makes you look ten years older than you are, friend Waters. An elderly man should always walk in the shade."

"What whims and fancies!" said Waters, stepping lightly across the square. "You're the strangest fellow! but come, your case, in a few words."

"Thus it is with us, then; excuse me, but even in the shade you look really past the figure you put yourself at: let me see, fifty-four, isn't it?"

"Forty-seven! my good fellow! What the deuce—"

"Rely upon it you're labouring under a mistake: it's full thirty years since I first met you in Jay's writ of right. Speaking of you, I should say, in defiance of verbal statement founded on memory, which is treacherous, I find, with regard to age, when we are getting grey; but judging from the date written by the hand of time on the face of the deed, it wrinkles as crabbed as court-hand—"

"I'm sixty. Well, well, be it so; and now for your case."

"No, Waters, you are not sixty; because if you were, by my reckoning, I should be sixty-seven, which I am not: but to resume. This is our case: Joshua Kesterton came to London with no character, and nothing but a penny loaf in his pocket. Good luck threw him in the way of the well-known Paul Winpennie: Paul had compassion on him, and raised him, by degrees, from an errand boy in his office, to first clerk; and, at last, took him in as joint partner in all his concerns. After some time, Paul retired to enjoy a splendid ease for the rest of his life. At the end of five years, he discovered a secret, namely, that an immense quantity of leisure was the worst stock a mercantile man could possibly have on hand. He was suddenly seen in the city again: whether he was not so keen as when he left it, or men had grown keener during his retirement, I know not; but Paul Winpennie, under whose touch every thing used to turn into gold, made ducks and drakes of his money; and, by half-a-dozen unlucky, or, as the world says, mad-cap speculations, was reduced from affluence to comparative beggary."

"Well, all this occurs every day, Hassell," said Waters.

"Ay, ay; but these only are preliminary facts."

"Unfortunately—"

"Hold your tongue, and hear me out. Well, the inquest—I omitted to say he was found dead one morning in his room; the inquest jury returned a verdict of 'died by the visitation—'"

"But I thought it was generally believed that he died of a broken heart, produced by grief."

"We have nothing to do with broken hearts and grief, as a man of your standing on the rolls ought to feel; we can only be governed by the record. But if the coroner's return had been *felo de se*, there would have been but little for the crown to take but his wife; and she, I think, from a know of her, would have been deemed

an incumbrance, by most people; although she soon got another husband."

"What! pauper as she was—"

"I said no such thing: if you interrupt me, I shall punish you by being prolix." Joshua Kesterton departed this life very shortly after his friend and benefactor, Winpennie; and, in a spirit of gratitude to the founder of his fortune, bequeathed a legacy of ten thousand pounds to Paul's widow."

"Bravo!"

"No, sir, it was not 'bravo!' he acted like an ass; for his own daughter, whom he left residuary legatee, was beggared by the bequest. Partly through his own ignorance of the actual state of affairs—partly through unexpected but apparently valid claims, made on his estate after his death, and the failure of a firm, who were his principal creditors; when we obtained a tolerable insight to his affairs, we discovered that, after satisfying the creditors, and paying the legacy to Mrs. Winpennie, which, you perceive, was a positive bequest, whereby she had a clear claim of priority over his residuary legatee, the poor girl, instead of having, as her father doubtless expected, a fine fortune, will scarcely get enough to pay for her mourning."

"A bad case," said Waters; "but won't Mrs. Winpennie do something for the girl?"

"That's a riddle which I can't solve," said Hassell; "for, before she had an opportunity to do so, or, in fact, before she knew that her legacy would make a skeleton of the estate, she got snapped up by a young fellow, who says he's a Dane, but whom I suspect to be a Kerryman. From all I can learn, he doesn't feel disposed to forego a farthing; and, as the woman married him without a settlement, he can do as he pleases, you know, with the money, when he gets it. I sincerely wish it may be soon, so that I can get out of town. The investigation of the claims of the principal creditors for whom I am concerned, is now within an ace of being concluded. As soon as the executors get our releases, of course, this gentleman, as he calls himself, who married the widow Winpennie, will insist on the full legacy; and however well inclined our friend Burdock, and his clients, the executors, may be towards the poor girl, who, I must tell you, was married into a mighty high, but very poor family, before her father's death, I can't see how they can help her. By George! here she comes—I dare say, on a visit to Burdock—and without her husband! That's odd. Poor thing! I'd rather not seem to see her. Let us cross over, and I'll stroll with you to the gate-way. Don't stare at her, and I'll be obliged to you."

The two attorneys walked to the other side of the square, and the lady passed hastily down the Inn towards Burdock's chambers. As she ascended the staircase, she heard him speaking, in rather a tender tone, at the door of his office, apparently, to some person who was taking leave of him; and, on reaching the first landing-place, she met a female, attired in a very gaudy manner, and altogether of rather singular appear-

ance, whose handkerchief was held to her eyes as though she were weeping, or desirous of concealing her face. When his fair client reached the office door, which still remained open, Burdock was pacing to and fro within, evidently much vexed and agitated.

"Are you alone, Mr. Burdock?" timidly inquired the lady, after she had stood at the door for a short time without being able to attract the notice of the attorney.

"My dear madam, I ask a thousand pardons," replied Burdock, advancing towards her; "I have been so annoyed that—Did you meet a lady in sulphur and sky-blue?"

"I did, sir: she appeared to be in tears."

"Ah! poor woman! she is much to be pitied; and yet, I protest, her appearance is so questionable, that I sincerely regret that the unhappy state of her affairs led her to pay me a visit. Had she not brought a letter, which I hold in my hand, from a most respectable friend in the country, I should certainly have scrupled to receive her. She's very unfortunate, though, I declare."

"But what are her griefs to mine, sir?"

"My dear Mrs. Wyburn, as I have often told you, bad as your case is, there are thousands who would deem your situation a state of bliss compared with what they suffer. Here, for instance, is this poor woman, forty years of age at least, weak enough to come to me with paint on her cheeks, and dressed in blue and brimstone, but with acute feelings, notwithstanding her folly, who marries a man for love, and, in a few days after the ceremony, is deserted and robbed by him of what should have supported her in old age."

"Wretched woman! like me, then, she is a beggar, I suppose!" said Mrs. Wyburn.

"I fear the poor creature is almost penniless, indeed. Her business with me was to receive a small sum, which my friend, from whom she brought the letter I hold, had confided to me three years ago, to invest for her. I placed it in the hands of your lamented father; and she holds his note for the amount, but we can't pay her. If she had not told me she had a husband, in whom the title now vested, having had no notice from him of the marriage, she must, of course, have had her money; but now it is impossible. And the woman implored me so not to let her starve, that, in order to pacify and get rid of her, I have been compelled to request her to call again; for which I am now most heartily sorry. I feel ashamed to have her seen go out of my office. But, odso! my dear madam! how is it that I see you alone? Where is your husband?"

"In prison!"

"At whose suit?"

"In truth, I cannot tell: it is enough for me to know that he is a prisoner, and that I do not possess the means of setting him at liberty. Kind Mr. Burdock, will you still listen to me? Will you give me your counsel?"

"I am grieved—heartily grieved," said Burdock; "but I really feel at a loss how to advise—how to benefit you."

"Oh! you can—you can, indeed; or, if you cannot, there is none on earth who will. You know not half of my distresses. I am a thousand-fold more wretched than you imagine. Pity me, sir; pity me, and I will pray for you."

"I do pity you, most sincerely," said Burdock, considerably affected; "but let me implore you to be calm."

"I will be calm as marble, sir. I have told you my husband is in prison, without shedding a tear; and now, without a sigh, I will tell you, that my sorrows are of such a nature that I cannot—dare not—must not—breathe a hint to him of what I suffer."

"You positively alarm me, may dear madam. I cannot imagine you have been guilty of any imprudence; and, if not, what is there that a wife devotedly attached, as I know you are, to her husband, cannot confide to his bosom?"

"Oh! much, much, Mr. Burdock. I have no friend—none in the world, to whom I can tell my afflictions, but you; and I have no claim on you to hear them: you have endured too many vexations, in your struggles for my welfare, already."

"I regret that no better success has attended my poor endeavours, Mrs. Wyburn; but believe me, that as far as prudence will allow, my best exertions are still at your service."

"Then you will hear and advise me?"

"I will, as I hope for mercy, to the best of such judgment as I am endowed with."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! on my knees I will thank you."

"Nay, nay! I must not be repaid thus: I shall charge the consultation in my bill, and I hope you will one day pay it," said the attorney, with a smile. "Come, again let me entreat you to be calm."

"I am sure I shall be so; I have overcome the bitterness of bringing my mind to tell you my little tale, and I feel capable of doing so properly. Your kindness gives me additional courage and self-command. I shall endeavour to restrict myself to simple facts, and I will go through the task, unless my heart break in the attempt. Are we free from interruption?"

Entirely so; my clerks are both out, and I will answer no one until you have done."

"Then I will begin at once. I solemnly enjoin you, sir, not to reveal what I am about to tell you, to any mortal; for, alas! it concerns my husband's honour—nay, even his life. Much as he loves me, I think he would deprive me of existence, rather than let me make you acquainted with his weakness—I will say his crime; but, as it may save us both from being even more wretched than we are, I will trust it to your ear. When George Wyburn married me, he knew I had considerable expectations, and therefore, did not demand a settlement. My poor father allowed us a handsome income, while he lived: George was high-spirited and gay, but not extravagant; and we had enough—nay, something to spare, after our yearly expenses were paid, until within a few months before my father's death, when a sad and sudden change came over us. At

Harrowgate, my husband, Heaven knows how, formed an acquaintance with a man, who, after a short time, was our constant visitor and George's bosom friend. In three months, under the influence of his associate, my husband became a gambler and a duellist! He was still kind to me, and I concealed his faults from my father. Vain were all my attempts to reclaim him; I had lost my power of persuading him, but yet I feel assured he loved me. I now bitterly lament my folly in keeping his proceedings a secret from my father; for he went on in his evil ways. At last the climax arrived: he lost more than he could pay; and, unable to bear up against the dishonour which his default would have brought upon him, he abruptly quitted Harrowgate, with a determination to destroy himself. He wrote to his new friend, stating that, ere the letter reached its destination, he should be numbered with the dead. He declared that he felt unable to address his poor wife; but he warmly recommended her to the care of him to whom he wrote, and begged that her unfortunate husband's fate might be revealed to her as gradually as possible. The wretch came to me as he was desired: he told me a little, and I learnt the rest from the letter which George had sent him. Accompanied by this man, I made all possible haste to the place whence George had written. I found him alive and unhurt. His pistols were lying on the table before him, when I rushed into the room, and he was writing to me: he could not leave the world without bidding me an eternal adieu! He had lingered over the paper, which was damped by his tears; but, from the language of the sentence, which he was penning when we entered, his resolution to destroy himself seemed to have been unshaken; and, I am convinced that, had we not arrived sooner than he expected, and had not his heart urged him to assure me that he loved and blessed me in his last moments, I should that day have been a widow. He embraced and wept over me, but blushed before his friend, and seemed dreadfully enraged at our arrival. When I, at length, succeeded in soothing him a little, he asked my companion to advise him how he ought to act. The reply I can never forget. It was this: 'Why, truly, Mr. Wyburn, after having stated that you were going to commit suicide, there is but one course to save your reputation, namely, to keep your word; but, as I suppose no one but myself, except your wife, is acquainted with the circumstance, no doubt you will see the wisdom of suffering certain notions, which, perhaps, are rather too rigorously attended to, in some quarters, giving place to the dictates of religion, et ceteras; that is, if you feel satisfied that I can be depended on to keep your secret.' 'Will you swear to do so?' asked my husband. 'Nay,' replied the other, 'if you doubt me, you have your remedy. Were I capable of wronging my friend, I surely should not be prevented from so doing by the comparatively cobweb fetters of a private oath.' Subsequently, I prevailed upon him, by reproaches and entreaties, to promise me solemnly that he would relinquish all thoughts of carry-

ing his fatal resolution into effect: but he made the most solemn vow, that if either I or his friend betrayed the weakness, or, to use his own words, the cowardice, he had shown, in not completing what he had meditated, he should certainly blow out his brains the first opportunity; for he never could exist under the idea that he was the laughing-stock of the world. Summoning up his fortitude, he returned with us to Harrowgate; and, in a few days, a portion of what he had lost at the gaming-table was paid; for the remainder, he gave bonds payable on the death of my father; and I firmly believe he has never touched the dice-box since."

"Then I am glad to say all seems to have ended more happily than could have been expected," observed Burdock.

"Not so, sir—not so, indeed," replied Mrs. Wyburn; "that fatal friend still hovers near him; my husband still hugs the snake that destroys while he embraces him. Those gambling debts, I am certain, were contracted by my husband with the villain's confederates."

"Then the bonds have been, at length, put in force against him?"

"They have; and I owe my husband's loss of liberty, as I once almost did the loss of life, to the machinations of Blennerhagen!"

"Blennerhagen!" exclaimed the attorney, considerably surprised; "you surely do not mean our Mr. Blennerhagen—he who married Paul Winpennie's widow!"

"He is the man," replied Mrs. Wyburn; "he obtained an introduction to Mrs. Winpennie by means of my husband. Foolish as she is, and lucky as she has been, in one respect, alas! to my sorrow, I sincerely pity her; for miserable will be her fate. She is linked to a calm, determined villain, who entertains no spark of affection for her: the possession of my poor father's legacy, and not her person, was his object in marrying her."

"And how do you know this, my dear madam?"

"Oh, sir! Blennerhagen has thrust his confidence upon me, and I have been compelled to listen to him. Unhappily, he has, or pretends to have, a passion for me; and I have endured the confession from his own lips. He has boldly told me, that, had George committed suicide, he should have offered me his hand, as soon as decency would have permitted him to do so. You find, sir, that I am as good as my word: I tell you this without a blush or a tear, while you shudder!"

"Shudder! ay, and I well may. Thou dost not blush or weep, indeed, my poor young sufferer; but thy cheek is deathly pale, and thy eyes seem burning in their sockets. I beseech you, let us postpone this."

"Nay, nay, pray hear me to an end: I have brought my courage to bear it all; if I relapse, I cannot work upon myself to go through the ordeal again."

"But why not unmask this villain—this hypocrite—this wolf?"

"Your honest indignation makes you forget that my husband's life is in his power. That fatal

letter, which George wrote to him when he quitted Harrowgate with a determination to commit suicide, is still in the possession of Blennerhagen; I saw him take it from his pocket-book but two days ago, although he protests to George that it is destroyed; and the publication of it would, I fear, hurry my husband to self-destruction at once. I know George's temper so well, that I tremble at the idea of incurring so great a risk; and yet what else to do I know not; for the demon, after persecuting me in vain, for months, now holds that hand-writing before my eyes, and dares me to be virtuous!"

"The monster! I will move mountains, but he shall be defeated—ay, and punished."

"Thank you, thank you! my heart thanks you: I knew you would be good; but, alas! I doubt your power. You know not with whom you have to deal. Blennerhagen prides himself on being impregnable: he talks to me of working like a mathematician: he says that all his plans are laid down with such geometrical precision that they cannot fail. He has thrown such a magic web about me, that I have felt myself to be almost his slave; and yet, thank heaven, I am innocent, and loath him. Save me, Mr. Burdock! but not at the expense of my husband's life: save me, I implore you! I have no other friend."

"I will save—I will extricate you, if it be in the power of man. I have worked like a negro for my money, and may soon be past working, and want it. I have debarred myself of every indulgence; but I can—I will afford to gratify my feelings, for once in my life, even at the risk of diminishing some of my hard-earned little hoard. Mrs. Wyburn, I'll back myself, if need be, with a thousand pounds, and, confound the fellow, have at him! Excuse me for swearing; but I'm warmed, and feel a pleasure in indulging—"

"Be temperate, sir, in your proceedings, lest you forget that next to my own innocence, my husband's life—"

"Do not fear, madam. Is Mr. Wyburn in prison, or at a lock-up house?"

"In the lock-up house, sir, in Serle's Buildings."

"Then I'll bail him. Hassell may laugh at me, when he hears that I have stepped out of my cautious path, if he likes; but I'll begin by bailing Wyburn; for his liberty, at this time, is of the utmost value. Within a few days, the great struggle will come on, which must settle the main question between Hassell's clients and the executors: on the fortunate result of that depends your only hope; and a poor hope it is, I must confess: still, Wyburn should be at large to fight it out, and strive to the last. After to-day, I ought to be in hourly consultation with him."

"Blennerhagen knows all this; and, not expecting God would raise up such a friend to George, has caused him to be arrested. As he boasts of generally making his actions produce double results, he flatters himself, also, that I, being thus overwhelmed with this new misfor-

tune, and deprived of the protecting presence of my husband—"

"Curse him! he shall be foiled! I won't put up with it, while I have breath!"

"I must tell you—for, as you now have heard so much, you should know all—that one of the threats or temptations he holds out to me, is this: 'Wyburn,' he says, 'will soon, in all probability, be entirely dependent on my bounty; for, having, through my marriage with Mrs. Winpennie, an entire control over the ten thousand pounds legacy, which will, apparently, eat up the whole of your father's property, after payment of the debts, I can starve Wyburn, if I like.' This is a specimen of the language which he dares to use to me. Had I my jewels left, I could have procured a sufficient sum, perhaps, to obtain George his liberty, without troubling you; but Blennerhagen obtained them from me long ago, without Mr. Wyburn's knowledge, by protesting that he had spent all he possessed to keep the bond-holders quiet, and wanted money to enable him to make a figure before Mrs. Winpennie. I have been very weak and very foolish, you will say; but what could I do? Blennerhagen dares me to reveal a syllable of what passes at our interviews, to my husband: he tells me that he should instantly detect my treachery by George's conduct. I am forced to see—to hear him: he is the worst of tyrants. If I strive to extricate myself from his wiles, I plunge deeper in his foils. To remain passive is to offer up myself a willing victim to a being, whom, of all others, I abhor. Could I but have taken counsel of my husband, all might have been well; but I have not dared to breathe a word to him of my sorrows; and Blennerhagen well knows how to obtain advantages over a wife, deprived, as I have been, of her natural supporter."

"It shall be at an end, I tell you: Wyburn shall be bailed, and I'll try if I can't play off a few tricks. We'll countermine this scoundrel. I'll insure your husband's life for my security, and then, if he have so high a sense of honour as you think, he won't fix me as his bail by shooting himself; for I shall make him understand that the office won't pay, if the insured perishes by his own hands; so that we're safe until November; and, in the interim, I'll sacrifice a little to those feelings which laudable prudence has taught me, hitherto, to smother. It's hard if a man cannot make a fool of himself once in his life; and, should I loose my time and money both, humanity will be a plea for me, with my own conscience, and that of every honest man in the world. Besides, I'm only fifty, and shall not die a beggar if it comes to the worst, perhaps. I will fulfil my promise, madam, be assured. Time is precious! have you any thing more to ask of me?"

"A glass of water," faintly replied Mrs. Wyburn; "a glass of water and a little air, for my strength is gone."

Burdock, with great alacrity, opened the little window of his room, and brought Mrs. Wyburn some water, in a broken cup, time enough to

save her from fainting. Some one knocked at the outer door, and she almost immediately afterwards rose to depart. Burdock conducted her to the foot of the staircase, begging her to keep up her spirits, and protesting that he thought he should prove himself as good a mathematician as Blennerhagen; "for," added he, "I have dabbled in the science, and Euclid still affords me amusement in my hours of relaxation from legal business."

The person who had knocked at the office door just before Mrs. Wyburn's departure, was the bearer of a note from Blennerhagen's wife, in which she earnestly requested the favour of a consultation with Burdock, at her own house, on an affair of the utmost importance. The lady stated that she was confined to her room by indisposition, otherwise she would have paid him a visit in Farnival's Inn; and she protested that, if he did not so far indulge her immediately to obey her summons, she would, at the risk of her life, wait on him at his office.

"Paul Winpennie's choice was always a fool," muttered Burdock, as he threw the letter on his table, after having perused its contents; "she was always fantastical, and apt to magnify atoms into elephants; but I don't think she would write me such an epistle as this, if something extraordinary had not occurred; ergo, I'll go to her at once. Perhaps I may glean something which may assist me in extricating Wyburn. I hope I shall; for though I have promised his wife so much, at this moment I can't see my way clear a single inch beyond my nose, except so far as regards bailing him, which I'll do as soon as I return. It is possible, that the woman has discovered something; for the most silly of her sex possess an astonishing acuteness on particular occasions. I may meet Blennerhagen with his wife, too: at all events I'll go, and ponder on the way as to what proceedings I ought to take against this mathematical monster; for act against him, I will: on that I'm fixed; that is, if I can find out a way to do so, with any prospect of success."

As Burdock concluded this little soliloquy, one of his clerks returned; and the old gentleman, without a moment's delay, set off towards Blennerhagen's house. On reaching the corner of the street, in which it stood, he was accosted by a female, who begged him, in a very mysterious manner, to follow her.

"My good woman," said Burdock, "you are in error, I apprehend."

"Not if I am speaking to Mr. Burdock, and if you are going to Mrs. Blennerhagen," replied the woman.

"I certainly am that man," said Burdock; "and you are quite right in supposing that I am on my way to visit that lady: what then?"

"Follow me, and I will conduct you to her. I am her woman, and act by her orders."

"Mighty odd!" exclaimed the attorney; "but lead on—I'll follow you. I suppose she has her reasons for this; and it matters but little to me which way I go, so that—mark me, woman!

so that I am not led a dance; for though I walk slowly, on account of an infirmity in my knees, time, I assure you, is precious to me. Go forward."

The woman immediately walked on towards a little back street, down which she proceeded a short distance, and then turned under an old arched gateway into a solitary yard. The buildings on one side of this place appeared, by a weather-beaten notice-board, to have been long without tenants; through a low wall, on the opposite side of the yard, there were entrance-doors to the back gardens of a range of respectable houses.

"I perceive," said Burdock, as the woman opened one of the garden doors, "that you are smuggling me in the back way. Give my compliments to your mistress, and tell her, that I prefer entering the ordinary manner. If you will step through the house, I dare say I shall be at the front door nearly as soon as you have opened it."

Burdock then turned on his heel, and strode away from his guide at rather a brisk pace. On reaching the front door, he found the woman there waiting for him. Casting on the old gentleman a look of reproach, and significantly putting her finger to her lips, she conducted him up stairs, and silently ushered him into Mrs. Blennerhagen's dressing-room. The lady, who was reclining on a sofa, attired in an elegant morning-dress, rose as he entered; and, between jest and earnest, reproached him for not having given a more prompt attention to her note. Burdock protested that he had not been guilty of the least delay in obeying her commands.

"Well, well! said the lady, "perhaps I am wrong; but, to a woman of my nerves, suffering at once under indisposition, and the most agonizing suspense, every moment seems to be an age."

"What's the matter, madam?" inquired Burdock. "Where is Mr. Blennerhagen?"

"Thank Heaven! he is out: my anxiety has been intense lest you should not arrive before he returned. My dear Mr. Burdock, I'm in the greatest distress."

"Then, upon my honour and conscience, madam, I don't see how I can be of any assistance to you; for my hands are so full of female distress just now—"

"Oh, sir! but not such pressing—such important distress as mine. Recollect that I'm a wife—a wife, Mr. Burdock, and not altogether indifferent to my husband."

"Well, madam! there are many wives who can say quite as much, I assure you. But now for your facts: I am bound to hear, even if I cannot assist you."

"Ah! you're a kind—a dear old gentleman. I always said so, and now I find that I am right. You have a heart formed to sympathize with those who are in sorrow."

"The world thinks rather differently of me," replied Burdock: "my feelings, I know by experience, will bear as much as most men's."

Business, madam—business has hardened them: but, allow me to ask, what has occurred? You seem to have been ruffled."

"Do I? said Mrs. Blennerhagen, turning to a looking-glass which stood on the table by her side, and glancing at the reflection of her still lovely face, with a look of anxiety. "Well, now I see myself, I declare I am quite frightened. I positively look like a hag! don't I? I ought not to suffer such trifles to affect me so severely."

"Trifles, my dear madam!" emphatically exclaimed the attorney: "I beg your pardon; but I was led to understand, from the tenor of your language—"

"Attribute it to the excess of womanly fears; increased, perhaps, by indisposition, and excuse me. We are weak creatures, as you must know; even the very best of us are agitated into agony, by phantoms of our own creation. My suspicions—"

"Am I summoned to advise you on suspicion, then?"

"Nothing more, I assure you; and, really, I ought to be ashamed to entertain, for one instant, so poor an opinion of Mr. B's taste; and, permit me to say it, of my own person. Now I reflect, it was exceedingly wrong of me, perhaps, to be jealous of the woman."

"I wish, with all my heart, madam, you had reflected an hour ago."

"Would that I had! I should have been saved much—much uneasiness; but I now laugh at my fears," said the lady, affecting to titter.

"I am sorry I cannot join you, madam."

"Ah, Mr. Burdock! I know the interest you take in my happiness; and, therefore, I sent for you to advise—to comfort me. I look up to you as to my father."

"You do me an honour, Mrs. Blennerhagen, to which I never had an idea of aspiring."

"The honour is entirely on my side, Mr. Burdock," replied the lady, taking one of Burdock's hands in both her own; "I feel proud to be permitted to make free with so worthy and so respectable a character. My confidence in you is unbounded, Mr. Burdock: you see, I receive you in my dressing-room—"

"For mine own part," interrupted the attorney, "I should have preferred the parlour; and so, most probably, would Mr. Blennerhagen."

"Don't talk so foolishly, Mr. Burdock: attorneys, like physicians, are privileged persons, you know."

"True, true, madam," said Burdock, rather hastily quitting his seat; "and, now, as the cause of our conference is at an end, I will take my leave."

"My dear sir, you surely are not going to quit me in this state! you have not heard my complaint."

"I thought your mind was easy on the subject."

"Oh! by no means! I am far from soothed—far from tranquilized: your discrimination may shed a new light upon my mind. I must insist on throwing myself upon your consideration."

"For consistency's sake, don't blow hot and cold in the same moment, Mrs. Blennerhagen. Be in a rage, or be pacified; and if I must hear your tale of woe, the sooner you tell it the better."

"You'll promise not to call me silly, foolish woman, then, if you think my apprehensions were groundless."

"Of course, madam, I could never call a lady a fool to her face, even if I thought she deserved it."

"How deeply I am indebted to you! you cannot conceive how much the cast of your countenance, when you look pleasant, reminds me of my late excellent husband, poor Mr. Winpennie! Alas! I never was jealous of him, with or without a cause. He was the best—the kindest—"

"Excuse me, madam; but, however I may reverence the memory of Mr. Winpennie, my time is of too much value, and too seriously engrossed just now, by my duties towards the living, to listen to an eulogy on the dead."

"Well! no doubt you are perfectly right: the value of your time, I know, must be great. In a few words, then, about two hours ago, my servant acquainted me that there was a strange-looking creature inquiring at the door for Mr. Blennerhagen. She was painted up to the eyes; and dressed in a vulgar amber-coloured pelisse, with staring sapphire ribbons—"

Burdock here interrupted the lady, by exclaiming, "hang me if I wasn't the woman in brimstone and blue!" at the same time bursting into a hearty laugh.

"Why, Mr. Burdock, you astonish me!" exclaimed Mrs. Blennerhagen; "I beseech you to cease; my head will split—you shatter my nerves to atoms. I insist upon your explaining yourself. I shall scream if you don't cease laughing, and tell me the meaning of this mysterious conduct."

"Oh, madam!" replied Burdock, endeavouring to resume his gravity, "do not be alarmed at that unhappy creature; I sent her here."

"Is it possible, Mr. Burdock, that a man of your respectability can have such acquaintance?"

"The woman is not what she appears, Mrs. Blennerhagen. I saw her, for the first time in my life, to-day. Her business with me was briefly as follows:—About three years ago, a certain sum was remitted to me by a country attorney, for whom I act as agent, to invest for this woman. I deposited it in the hands of Joshua Kesterton. Circumstances now compel her to call in her money: but a legal difficulty occurs in paying her off; and I referred her to Mr. Blennerhagen, who, in all probability, will be the party most interested in the matter; thinking that, as the sum was small, he might, perhaps, from motives of charity, relieve the woman's wretchedness, by waiving the legal objection at his own risk. Ha, ha! And so I have to thank the woman in sulphur and blue for my walk, eh?"

"Mr. Burdock, I vow, sir, that you overwhelm me with confusion; but if you were a woman, I am sure you would admit, that when a female of this lady's appearance makes such particular inquiries after a newly-married man, and refuses to tell her business to his wife—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed the attorney again; "that too, I plead guilty of producing. I told her, that you had nothing to do with the matter; for that the legal estate was vested, by your marriage, in Blennerhagen. I am willing to acknowledge, that the circumstances were suspicious; and, as long as I live, be assured, that I will never send a female, in a yellow and azure dress, to a married man again. Hoping that you will forget the uneasiness which I have innocently brought upon you, I now, madam, beg permission to withdraw."

Burdock had risen from his chair, and was on the point of taking up his hat and cane, when Mrs. Blennerhagen's servant entered the room, and said, in a hurried tone, that her master was at the street door.

"Then I'll wait to see him," said Burdock, placing his hat and cane on the table again, and resuming his seat.

"Heavens, sir! are you mad?" exclaimed Mrs. Blennerhagen. "Unfortunate woman, that I am! I did not expect him this half-hour. What is to be done, Wilmot?"

"Don't be alarmed, madam," replied the woman; "there's quite time enough for the gentleman to get into the cupboard."

"Is there no other resource left, Wilmot?"

"None that I can see, madam!" replied the woman; "he'll meet master on the stairs if he goes down; and though there's time enough, there's no time to be lost. Sir," added she, taking up the attorney's hat and cane, "you'd better slip in at once."

"Slip in!" exclaimed Burdock; "why should I slip in? What do you mean?"

"Don't speak so loud, sir; master will hear you," said Wilmot.

"What do I care?" cried Burdock, in a stern tone; "are you out of your senses? Why should I hide like a galivanting beau in a farce?"

"Oh! the wretch! he'll be the ruin of my reputation!" exclaimed the lady.

"Reputation! What have I to do with your reputation, Mrs. Blennerhagen?"

"This is my mistress's dressing-room, you see, sir."

"Well you brought me here, woman; and, if it is, as your mistress says, attorneys, like physicians, are privileged persons."

"Oh! he won't discriminate, Wilmot. Don't you know, you cruel man, that we can't blind others with what we blind ourselves? I am as pure as an angel; but appearance is every thing; and Mr. Blennerhagen is more jealous than a Turk."

"That I am sure he is, madam; for he doats on you."

"And you, Mr. Burdock, will not be complai-

sant enough to save our connubial bliss from being wrecked for ever. If you don't comply, I must scream out, and say you intruded yourself."

"Will you hear me speak?" cried the enraged attorney.

"Hark, how he bawls! And he knows well enough the wife of Cæsar must not even be suspected," said Mrs. Blennerhagen; "let the wretch ruin me—do, Wilmot."

"Indeed I won't, madam, if I can help it. Come, sir, if you are a gentleman, prove yourself to be so."

"Bedlamites! will you hear me? Is not my character—"

"Oh! he is a bachelor attorney, and lives in chambers, Wilmot; and you know the character of that class of men is quite obnoxious in case of reputation: but let him have his way; I must be his martyr, I see."

"Come, come, sir, right or wrong, be civil to a lady."

"What, do you think I'll make a Jack-pudding of myself?"

"Stop his mouth, Wilmot; don't let him speak, for I hear the creak of Mr. Blennerhagen's boot."

The lady and her woman now seized on the astonished attorney, and thrust him into a closet. The door was instantly closed on him, and the key turned in the lock. Mrs. Blennerhagen returned to the sofa; and Wilmot was applying a smelling-bottle to her nose, bathing her brows, &c. as though she were just reviving from a fainting fit, when the majestic Blennerhagen entered the room.

With a keen and hurried glance he seemed to survey every object around him, while he closed the door. He then approached the sofa, and uttered a few endearing epithets while he relieved Wilmot from the task of supporting her mistress. Anxious to get rid of him, Mrs. Blennerhagen rapidly recovered; and her husband having, apparently, by accident, mentioned that he had left a friend in the parlour, she urged him, by all means, to return to his guest, as she found herself comparatively well, and desirous of obtaining a little repose. Blennerhagen kissed her cheek; and after recommending her to the care of Wilmot, passed round the sofa to a writing-desk, which was placed on a table behind it, where he remained a few moments, and then hastily withdrew.

Mrs. Blennerhagen immediately resumed her activity. "Now, my dear Wilmot," said she, "our only hope is to get the attorney down the back stairs, and away through the garden."

"That is how I have settled it, madam, in my own mind," said the woman: "master won't be up again at least these ten minutes."

"If you have any pity, emancipate me from this state of torture," groaned poor Burdock: "I would face a roaring lion rather than remain here any longer: my reflections are most poignant."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Blennerhagen, "I've lost the key."

"Then, of course, you will permit me to burst open the door," said the attorney.

"Not on any account, be patient I beseech you. Wilmot, where could I have put it?"

"I don't know, madam; you locked the door yourself: search in your bosom."

"I have, but it is not there; nor on the sofa—nor any where. You must have had it."

"Indeed, madam, I never saw it since you took it off the shelf to lock the door."

"Women!" exclaimed Burdock, whose patience was completely worn out; "rash, mischievous, accursed woman! take notice that I am become desperate; and if you do not find the key and release me instantly, I shall certainly break out, and depart, at all hazards."

"For all our sakes have patience, sir," said the lady, in a soothing tone; "be quiet but for a few moments; I hear Mr. Blennerhagen's boot again."

Before his wife could reach the sofa, Blennerhagen strode in, accompanied by a stranger.

"Outraged, injured, as I am," said he, fixing his dark eye indignantly on his wife, "I make no apology for thus introducing a stranger to your apartment. This gentleman is my friend, and comes here with me, at my own request, to be a witness of my shame; so that I may be able to obtain legal reparation, at least, from the unknown assassin of my happiness. Peterson," added he, turning to the stranger, "take the key and open that closet-door."

"Lord! Mr. Blennerhagen," said the lady, with a forced laugh; "don't carry on the joke, by making such serious faces. I told you, Wilmot, he would be too deep for us: see, now, if he hasn't got the key. Where did you find it, love?"

"I took it, madam, from your hand," replied Blennerhagen, "when your mind was occupied in affecting a painful and languishing recovery from syncope. This may be a jest to you, but it is none to me; nor shall it be to him who has wronged me. I have set my mark upon the villain: perceiving a portion of male attire, which I could not recognize as my own, hanging from the crevice of the closet-door, while I appeared to be busy at the desk behind you, I cut it off. I have it here," added Blennerhagen, producing a triangular piece of brown cloth from his pocket; "let the man who owns it claim it if he dare."

"Adam Burdock dares to claim his own in any place," exclaimed the attorney, bursting the door open with one furious effort; "that's a piece of the tail of my coat."

"Mr. Burdock!" exclaimed Blennerhagen.

"Ay, sir! Mr. Burdock, heartily ashamed of himself, for being made a ninny by your wife, or a dupe by both of you and my precious friend, Mrs. Wilmot. You all look astonished; but, be assured, there is no one here half so astonished as myself. I believe you to be capable of any thing, Blennerhagen; but, on a moment's consideration, I think your wife is too much of a simpleton to act as your confederate, in a plot on

my pocket; and notwithstanding your skill in mathematics, I am willing to attribute all this to mere accident."

"He calls me a simpleton, Wilnot; he casts a slur on my intellects, Mr. Blennerhagen," exclaimed the lady.

"In that he is more uncharitable than myself, madam," said Blennerhagen; "it may be an accident, it is true; but I question whether the gentleman, with all his professional skill, will be able to persuade a special jury to think so."

"I am sure my mistress is as innocent as the child unborn," observed Mrs. Wilnot.

"Hold your tongue, woman, and leave the room," said Blennerhagen, angrily.

"Indeed, I shall not leave the room," said Wilnot: "I'll stand by my mistress to the last, and won't leave her for you or any body else. You're a couple of vile wretches; and there isn't a pin to choose between you."

"Oh! Wilnot, thou art thy poor heart-broken mistress's only friend, after all, sobbed Mrs. Blennerhagen; "she is the victim of circumstances and her own refined feelings."

"Peterson," said Blennerhagen, "I am under the unpleasant necessity of requesting you to remember all that you have just witnessed. You will agree with me, I think, that I ought to make this man quit my house before I leave it myself."

"Unquestionably," replied Peterson.

"I shall do no such thing," said Burdock; "conscious of my innocence, I defy you—I laugh at you; and, before I quit this roof, I will make you wish you had sooner crossed the path of a hungry wolf than mine. I dare you to give me half an hour's interview."

"Ought I to do so, Peterson?" calmly inquired Blennerhagen.

"Not without a witness, I think," was the reply.

"With a score of witnesses, if you will," said Burdock: "events have precipitated my proceedings: with a score of witnesses, if you will. But mark me, man, you shall lament, if we are in solitude, that there will still be one awful witness of your villainy. I will unmask your soul; I will show you to yourself, and make you grind your teeth with agony, unless you are, indeed, a demon in human form."

"Heavens! Mr. Burdock," exclaimed Mrs. Blennerhagen, "what have you to say against my husband?"

"It matters not, madam; he shall hear me in this place, or elsewhere, hereafter."

"I scorn your threats, sir," said Blennerhagen; "and, publicly or privately, I will meet any accusation you may have to make against me."

"Privately be it then, if you dare."

"Dare, sir! Leave the room every body: nay, I insist; Peterson and all. Now, sir," said Blennerhagen, closing the door after his wife, Wilnot, and Peterson, who, in obedience to his command, had left the room; "now, sir, we are alone, what have you to say?"

"Blennerhagen," said the attorney, fixing his

keen eye on that of the Mathematician, "George Wyburn has been arrested."

"It is an event that has been long looked for. I am rather hurt that, in communicating with his friends on the subject, he should have given you a priority over myself. I lament to say that he has fallen into bad hands."

"He has," replied Burdock; "but I will endeavour to release him."

"I thank you on behalf of my friend," said Blennerhagen, with a malicious smile; "but I would suggest, with great humility, that you will find sufficient employment, at present, to extricate yourself."

"Sir," said Burdock, "I wanted but the keynote to your character: every word you utter is in unison with your actions."

"We are alone," said Blennerhagen, "and I can allow you to be vituperative. Detection renders you desperate: that philosophy which enables me to gaze calmly on the wreck of my own peace, teaches me, also, to bear with those who are so unfortunate as to be guilty. I would not personally bruise a broken reed; I cannot descend to chastise the man, who injured me deeply, for an insult in words. The highwayman who has robbed us, may defame our characters with impunity; the lesser merges into the greater offence: we do not fly into a passion, and apply the cudgel to his back; we pity, and let the law hang him. If your hands were quite at liberty, pray what course would you adopt to benefit George Wyburn?"

"I am so far at liberty, I thank Providence," replied Burdock, "as to be able to bail him; and I mean to do so within an hour."

"You do?"

"Ay, sir, to the confusion of his enemies, as sure as I'm a sinner. You seem amazed."

"I am, indeed, to say the least, surprised, and naturally delighted to find fortune should so unexpectedly raise him up a friend."

"I am rather surprised myself; but I'll do it, I'm determined, hap what will."

"It is truly grievous—a matter of deep regret that I cannot fold you in my arms," said Blennerhagen. "How strange it is that the same bosom should foster the most noble and the basest of thoughts. In the human heart, the lily and the hemlock seem to flourish together. If it were possible that your offence against my honour could admit of palliation or forgiveness—but I beg pardon; I must be permitted to write a hasty line, on a subject of some importance, which, until this moment, I had forgotten. It is the miserable lot of man, that, in the midst of his most acute trials, he is often compelled to attend to those minor duties, the neglect of which, would materially prejudice some of those about him. I shall still give you my attention."

"Every syllable—every action of this man, now amazes me," said Burdock to himself, walking towards the window: "he almost subdues me from my purpose."

"I shall be entirely at your service in an instant," said Blennerhagen, advancing to the door

with a note, which he had hastily written, in his hand. "I beg pardon; oblige me by ringing the bell."

Burdock mechanically complied with his request; and Blennerhagen stepped outside the door to give his servant some directions, as Burdock conceived, relative to the note. During his brief absence, the attorney, acting either from experience or impulse, cast a glance on the little pad, consisting of several sheets of blotting-paper, which lay on the escrutoire. Blennerhagen had dried his note on the upper sheet: it was rapidly penned in a full, bold hand; and the impression of nearly every letter was quite visible on the blotting-paper. To tear off the sheet, to hold it up against the looking-glass, so as to rectify the reverse position of the words, and to cast his eye over those which were the most conspicuous, was the work of a moment. It ran thus:—"GILLARD—I must change my plan—let Wyburn be instantly released—contrive that he shall suspect that he owes his liberty to my becoming security for the debts—BLENNERHAGEN."

Burdock had conveyed this precious document to the side-pocket of his coat before Blennerhagen returned. He resolved not to act rashly upon it, but to consider calmly what would be the most efficacious mode of using it. He felt highly gratified that he now possessed the means of supporting Mrs. Wyburn's statement as to Blennerhagen's treachery. It afforded him considerable satisfaction, also, that he might, in all probability, not only, in some measure, benefit Wyburn, but, by politic conduct, force Blennerhagen to desist from giving him any trouble on account of the awkward situation into which he had been placed by Mrs. Blennerhagen's folly.

All these ideas darted through his brain with the rapidity of lightning. He felt pleased; and, doubtless, exhibited some symptoms of his internal satisfaction in his countenance; for Blennerhagen resumed the conversation, by saying, "You smile, sir: the prospect of doing a good action lights up your countenance, and makes you forget your personal troubles. Until this day, you have, to me, been an object of respect. What could induce you to act as you have done—to injure and then brave me? You threatened to unmask me—to make me crouch and tremble before you! I am still erect, and my hand is firm."

"Let that pass, sir," said Burdock; "the novelty—the ridiculous novelty, of my situation, must be my excuse. You can, perhaps, imagine the feelings of an innocent man, labouring under a sudden and severe accusation."

"I can, indeed," replied Blennerhagen. "Do you say you are innocent?"

"I scorn to answer such a question."

"Truly, your manner staggers me; your character has its weight, too: I should be exceedingly glad to see you exculpated. May I ask what brought you to my wife's dressing-room?"

"To that I will reply:—I received a summons from Mrs. Blennerhagen, and was conducted to this apartment by her servant; the idiot wanted

to smuggle me in the back way, but I wouldn't put up with it."

"One inquiry more, and I have done. On what occasion, and for what purpose, were you so summoned?"

"Eh! why—gadso! it's very absurd, to be sure; but there I stand at bay. I must consider before I answer your question: I'll speak to Hassell about it, and hear what he says on an A B case, without mentioning names. Perhaps it wouldn't be a breach of professional confidence either; but we shall see."

"Mr. Burdock, I am almost inclined to think, although appearances are powerful, that I have not been wronged. Mrs. Blennerhagen, although I respect and have married her, is not a woman for whom a man, with any philosophy, would carry an affair of this kind to extremities, particularly where the internal evidence is weak. I am willing to give you the full benefit of my doubts; but, sir, at the least, you have been indiscreet. Your conduct may cost me much: my reputation is at the mercy of other tongues; which, however, I must admit, may be silenced. Should I consent to smother this matter, will you, in return, comply with such request as I may make, without questioning my motives or betraying my confidence?"

"What if I decline to do so?"

"Then I will accept of nothing less than a thousand pounds."

"As hush-money, I suppose, you mean."

"Call it what you please. I shall put you to the test, most probably, within a week. You know the alternative: if you decline that too, I shall go on with the action, which, in justice to myself, I am compelled to commence immediately. That I may not be defeated, I must also leave my house, or turn my wife out of doors, to wait the result. But do not be alarmed, I will abide by what I have said—your services or a thousand pounds. After this, I need scarcely say to you, that I do not think I have been actually injured: but the case is clear against you; other eyes have witnessed appearances which go to impeach Mrs. Blennerhagen's virtue; and I act as any other man would, in demanding atonement, in some shape or other. I shall now send up my friend to see you out."

"*Rem quocunque modo rem!*" ejaculated the attorney, as Blennerhagen closed the door after him. "This fellow is a fearful one to strive with; and I am, unfortunately, in some degree, fettered by the fact he alludes to. But cheer up, Adam! your cause is good; be courageous, and you shall surely conquer."

Without waiting for the arrival of Peterson, Burdock snatched up his hat and cane, hastily descended the stairs, and, without looking to the right or left, quitted the house. He got into a coach at the first stand he came to, and directed the coachman to set him down, as quickly as possible, in Searle's buildings, Carey-street. On arriving at the lock-up house, he found that George Wyburn had already been liberated. He was, in some degree, prepared for this intel-

ligence, by Blennerhagen's letter to Gillard, of which he had so luckily obtained a copy. His regret at being thus anticipated by the agent of Blennerhagen, did not make him forget that it was a full hour beyond his usual dinner-time: he hastened to Symond's Inn coffee-house; where, notwithstanding the unpleasant scenes of the morning, he ate a very hearty dinner, drank an extra half-pint of wine, and perused the daily papers, before he returned to his chambers.

On entering his office, one of the clerks informed him that there was a lady in his private room, waiting, in the utmost anxiety, for his return. Burdock immediately walked in, and, to his great indignation and amazement, beheld Mrs. Blennerhagen. He recoiled from the sight of her unwelcome countenance, and would, perhaps, have fairly run away from her, if the lady had not pounced upon him before he could retrograde a single pace. She dragged him into the centre of the room; where, clasping one of his arms in her hands, she fell on her knees, and implored him to pity and relieve the most ill-starred gentlewoman that ever breathed. "Nothing shall induce me to rise from this spot," continued Mrs. Blennerhagen, "until you promise, at least, to hear me."

"I submit to my fate," replied Burdock. "Pray release my hand; these buildings are old, and I stand exposed to a murderous rush of air. I am naturally susceptible of cold, and have been taught by experience to avoid this spot. Release me instantly, or I must call the clerks to my assistance."

"Promise, then, to hear me."

"Anything, madam! Ods! have I not already told you I would submit to my fate? And a hard fate it is," continued Burdock, taking up a strong position behind his writing table as soon as his arm was at liberty; "I consider myself particularly unfortunate in ever having heard of the name of Burdock, or Wimpennie either."

"Don't asperse my late husband," said the lady; call me what you like, but don't asperse Paul. I am a wretched woman, Mr. Burdock."

"You're a very silly, self-sufficient woman, Mrs. Blennerhagen," replied the attorney. "Are you not ashamed to look me in the face, after having, by your absurd conduct, and the assistance of your satellite, your female familiar, brought me into a situation so distressing to a man of my respectability?"

"Don't speak against my poor Wilnot; don't call her names: call me names, if you must be abusive, and I'll bear it all patiently. As to your sneer upon my being familiar with her, I can safely say that, faithful as she is, I have never forgotten that Wilnot is a servant. A woman who has seen so much of this vile, odious world, as I have, is not to be told that too much familiarity breeds contempt."

"You misunderstand me, madam; but to explain would be useless. Allow me to ask you, coolly and temperately, after what has taken place, ~~when~~ in the devil brings you here? You

must be out of your senses; I am sure you must, or you'd never act thus."

"You will not say so when you know my motives; but, anxious as I feel to explain them, I can't help observing, how cruel it is for you to upbraid me with what took place to-day. I can lay my hand upon my heart, and declare that I acted for the best; any prudent woman would have done exactly as I did; for who could expect that a man of your years and experience would let the tail of his coat be caught in the closet-door!"

"Pray don't go on at this rate: go home, my good woman—go home at once."

"Good woman, indeed, Mr. Burdock! You forget, sir, that you are talking to the relict of the late Paul Wimpennie. I hope you do not mean to add insult to the injury you have done me."

"Zounds! Mrs. Blennerhagen, it is I who have been injured—injured by you, madam!"

"Oh! I beg your pardon; if you had only recollected that your coat—"

"Talk no more about it; it shall be as you please, if you will drop the subject, and come to the point at once. Why do I see you here?"

"I hope I may be permitted to sit."

"Oh! certainly—I beg pardon," said Burdock, handing Mrs. Blennerhagen a chair, and immediately returning to his position behind the writing-table.

"I am, at this moment, exceedingly indisposed, you will recollect," said the lady; "and I ought to be in bed, with a physician by my side, rather than in Farnival's Inn, talking to an attorney."

"You are perfectly right, madam; and I beg to suggest that you should avoid the fatigue of conversation as much as possible."

"I thank you for your friendly hint, Mr. Burdock, and will endeavour to profit by it. Now I'm going to surprise you. Wilnot, no matter how, contrived to overhear a great part of your conversation with Mr. Blennerhagen. It seems that a thousand pounds was the sum mentioned; but Wilnot thinks, and so do I, by good management, with a solemn declaration and her oath, half the money would settle the matter. Now, my dear Mr. Burdock, as you are a little obstinate and self-willed—you know you are, for you've too much sense to be blind to your own little failings—I thought I would come down at once, and, if you wavered, throw my eloquence and interest into the scale. I need not point out to you how much trouble it will save us both, if you can prevent this little affair from being made public. What say you?"

"Why, truly, madam, your matchless absurdity almost deprives me of utterance. You heap Pelion upon Ossa with such celerity, that, before I can recover from the surprise which one ridiculous action has produced, you stun me with a still more prodigious achievement."

"And can you really hesitate?"

"Hesitate, woman! Not at all: I'm resolute! Blennerhagen shall never see the colour of my coin."

"Why, Mr. Burdock! are you a man? Can you, for a moment, seriously think of suffering an injured lady's reputation to be placed in jeopardy for the sake of so paltry a sum?"

"Pray hold your tongue, or vexed as I am, I shall positively laugh in your face. Do you think I am mad, or that I find my money in the streets? But that I can scarcely conceive Blennerhagen is fool enough to think I am such a gudgeon as to bite at his bait, I should certainly be led to suspect what I hinted this morning to be true."

"That I am his confederate? and that we had laid our heads to entrap you? I would rather die than you should imagine that I was so vile a wretch! Oh! Mr. Burdock, I could not exist under such an imputation. To prove that I do not merit your odious suspicions, and as you are so ungenerous as not to come forward with your own money on this occasion, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll pledge the pearl necklace, tiara, earrings, &c. which poor Mr. Winnennie gave me on my wedding-day, and never would let me part with, even when he was distressed; I'll pledge these, and the ruby suite I was last married in, with my two gold watches, and as many little trinkets as will make up the money, which I'll give you before I sleep, if you will promise to keep the secret, and make the matter up with Blennerhagen; so that there may be no piece of work about it. Now what do you think of that?"

"Mrs. Blennerhagen," said Burdock, advancing from the situation which he had hitherto occupied, and kindly taking the lady's hand, "you are a very weak, imprudent woman: excuse me for saying so—it is the fact; and if you are not more careful, you will, in all probability, get into a position, from which you will find it impossible to extricate yourself. The present case is bad enough, in all conscience; but, I have some reason to hope, that it is to be got over without the sacrifice of your pearl necklace, or the ruby suite in which you were last married: at all events, let them remain in your own jewel-box for the present. We will not have recourse to either, unless, and until, all other earthly means fail. Let me, however, advise you as a friend, should you escape scot-free on this occasion, to be more careful in your conduct for the future. Now don't say another word, but go home and make yourself easy."

"Oh! Mr. Burdock," exclaimed the lady, "this is, indeed, most fatherly of you. Your words are balm to my agitated spirits; a sweet calm begins to pervade my bosom. Good Heavens! what's that?"

"What, madam?" eagerly inquired Burdock, casting a hurried glance around him.

"As I'm a living creature, I heard the creak of Blennerhagen's boot! He's coming! I'm sure he's coming!"

As the lady spoke, some one knocked at the outer door; and, immediately after, one of the clerks came in to announce, that the moment Mr. Burdock was disengaged, Mr. Blennerhagen would be glad to speak with him.

The attorney and his fair visitor gazed upon

each other in a very expressive manner, at this information: the lady whispered, "I shall faint; I'm sure I shall!" Burdock, after a brief pause, told the clerk that he should be at liberty in one minute, and the young man retired.

"How exquisitely annoying!" exclaimed the attorney, as soon as the door was closed; "this is the consequence of your indiscretion, madam."

"Don't abuse me, sir; don't tread upon a worm!" replied the lady. "We should not lose time in talking, but set our wits to work at once. Oh! if Wilmot were here now! That stupid clerk! couldn't he as well have said you were out, or particularly occupied, and told Mr. Blennerhagen to call again? Where shall I conceal myself? Have you no little room?"

"Not one, I am happy to say."

"Nor even a cupboard?—of course you have a cover: I can squeeze in any where, bless you!"

"There is not a hiding-place for a rat; the window is two stories from the ground, and excessively narrow into the bargain; so that circumstances luckily compel you to adopt the plain straight-forward course, which is always the best. I strongly suspect your husband has followed you here: to conceal yourself would be useless—nay, fatal. You must face him."

"Oh! Mr. Burdock, you drive me frantic!"

"Nay, nay, madam: pray be calm; don't tear your hair in that frightful manner!"

"Talk not of hair; besides, they're only ringlets which I wear in charity to Wilmot; it takes her an hour to dress my own. I scarce know what I'm doing or saying. Stay! if I open the upper and lower right-hand doors of that press or book-case, or whatever it is, won't they reach to the other wall?"

"Possibly they may."

"Then I can hide myself in the corner."

"Notwithstanding my caution, you are acting as unwisely as ever. I protest against all this, and give you notice that I will be no party to the concealment."

"Do hold your tongue, and be guided by me; you men have really no brains. There," said the lady, placing herself behind the two doors, which, as the side of the piece of furniture to which they belonged stood within a short distance of the corner of the room, effectually concealed her from observation, "now, if you'll only get rid of him quickly, I'll warrant you I shall be safe."

Burdock immediately rung a little table bell, and his clerk ushered in the Mathematician.

"You are, doubtless, surprised to see me so soon, sir," said Blennerhagen.

"Not at all; I shall never be surprised, again."

"A wise man should wonder at nothing, perhaps. Unexpected circumstances, which I will explain, have led me to visit you this afternoon. In the first place, I understand, from my servant, that a female has been sent to my house by your directions: her appearance and story, it seems, were equally extraordinary. May I be excused for having a natural curiosity to know who she was, and what she wanted? She was sent up, I

hear, to Mrs. Blennerhagen: I have no wish that she should trouble my wife again."

"Are you anxious to keep her business with you a secret from Mrs. Blennerhagen?"

"Possibly I may be; but I don't know until I discover what it is: we have all been young. Why do you ask?"

"Simply because your wife is in this room."

"I don't understand you."

"Mrs. Blennerhagen is now within hearing: she stands behind the doors of that old book-case."

"Excuse me, sir; you have dined, no doubt; but I am serious."

"And so am I," replied Burdock. "If you disbelieve what I say, go and see."

"Oh! you vile creatures!" exclaimed Mrs. Blennerhagen, rushing from the place of her concealment; "you pair of wretches! A plot! a plot! There's a vile plot laid between you to delude—to vilify—to destroy me. I see through it all. And you—you old, abandoned man," added the lady, addressing Burdock, "to lend yourself to such a scheme! I'm ashamed of you! You've played your parts well; but I will be a match for you. Oh! Heavens! is this the way to treat a wife? Mr. Blennerhagen, you may well look confounded."

"Confounded!" exclaimed Blennerhagen; "I'm thunder-struck!"

"Ay! no doubt you are. What, I am to be got rid of, I suppose, by this vamped-up affair between you and your satellite, as he dares to call poor Wilmot, to make room for your creature in sapphire and yellow. If I die in the attempt, I will see the bottom of it all, and expose you both!" Mrs. Blennerhagen now bustled out of the office.

"This woman is foolish," said Blennerhagen.

"I think so, decidedly," quoth the attorney.

"What brought her here, pray?"

"Why, as I was a little obstinate and self-willed, she came to throw her interest and eloquence into the scale, (I use her own words,) and induce me to prevent our little affair from being made public. Her woman, who overheard the conversation which I had with you this morning, seems to think that, although you ask a thousand pounds, with a little management, a solemn declaration of innocence, and her own oath, half the money would settle the matter. Ha, ha!"

Blennerhagen bit his lip. After a short pause, he inquired if the attorney had yet made up his mind to state, on what occasion, and for what purpose, he had visited Mrs. Blennerhagen in her dressing-room.

"I have not spoken to Hassell on the subject," replied Burdock; "but I feel no repugnance, under present circumstances, to say that she sent for me because she was jealous of the woman in brimstone and blue. I have her note, if you wish to look at it. When she heard you coming, I was pushed, *volens volens*, into the cupboard, by your wife and her maid. That, briefly, is the whole of the matter. By-the-by, I should add, that I acquainted Mrs. Blennerhagen with the lady's

business, and I am now willing to do you the same service."

"You are very obliging: to ascertain that, is partly my object in calling on you."

Burdock now went through the particulars of the poor woman's case with great minuteness. Blennerhagen listened very attentively, and, at the conclusion of the recital, observed, "This is all new to me."

"Of course it is," replied the attorney; "because, legally speaking, you have nothing to do with it. It concerns the executors, in the first instance; and not you, who, by your marriage, merely represent the legatee. Their straightforward course is to send the woman about her business, because she is a *feme covert*, and cannot give a release—the title being in her black-guard husband. The executors are bound to act strictly; but, if you, who are the party beneficially interested, out of motives of feeling think fit to run the risk of consenting to her paltry claim being paid off, out of your enormous legacy, why, of course, they would willingly do it. To give her a chance, I took leave to refer her to you, in order that you might hear the story from her own lips."

"I shall be happy to be guided by you," said Blennerhagen; "but I see nothing, for my own part, in this case that should induce us to go out of the usual course. Were we to put our hands into our pockets to relieve every deserving object that occurs to our notice, we should soon become paupers ourselves. Those who are rich have often as powerful calls on their charity for hundreds—nay, thousands, as pence; but they are compelled to exert their philosophy, and conquer their inclinations to relieve; in fact, for their own sakes, to marshal reason against mere feeling. You ground your appeal on the score of charity; but I could name much greater objects of charity than this woman. She must abide by the consequences of her own folly. She has been stripped of her property, and deserted by her husband, you say. Well, that's hard, I confess; but you know such cases are continually occurring. It would require the exchequer of a Cæsar to remunerate—for that is the proper word—to remunerate all the women who have been plundered by those whom they have chosen to make legal proprietors—observe me—legal proprietors of their property. Besides, we have only this person's own word in support of her strange statement. How do we know but what she was quite as improvident as her husband? And who is to say that, instead of his deserting his wife, the lady herself might not have driven him from his home? It is in the power of some of the sex to do such things."

"That may be true enough," said Burdock; "but I am warranted in saying the contrary is the fact, in the present case, by the letter of a most respectable correspondent, which the woman brought with her. That the husband was a most consummate villain, I have ample evidence. My informant states—but I will read that portion of his epistle," continued Burdock, taking a let-

ter from his desk: "speaking of the husband, he says, 'during his short stay in our neighbourhood, previously to the marriage, he contrived, by obtaining goods on credit from several tradesmen, to support a respectable appearance; and my unfortunate client, believing him to be a man of some property, although nobody knew who he was, or where he came from, encouraged his addresses.' And then, a little below, it is stated, that 'on account of a sudden indisposition with which she was attacked, the wedding was postponed. The delay thus produced had nearly proved fatal to the hopes of our adventurer: bills, which he had given to some of his creditors, became due, and were dishonoured. Proceedings being hinted at, he called the trades-people together, and very coolly requested them to give him time. The creditors said they did not feel inclined to do so, because'—favour me with your attention, Mr. Blennerhagen—'because they had strong suspicions that the bills were forgeries; and that, if such were the case—and they had but little doubt of the fact—it was in their power to hang him. This intimation, which would have staggered any man, but him to whom it was addressed, did not produce any visible effect on his feelings. He very calmly told them, in reply, that even if the bills were forgeries, which, of course, he could not admit, he should feel under no apprehension; for, said he, I know that you are all too needy to sacrifice your own interests for the sake of public justice: you cannot afford to lose your money; and lose it, you certainly would, as you all very well know, if you prosecuted me to conviction. Were I a wretch, without present means or future expectations, I should expect no mercy; but as you are aware that I am on the eve of marriage with a woman of some property, you will act upon that excellent maxim—charity begins at home, and keep the alleged forgeries in your pockets, in hopes that I shall take them up as soon as I am married. You owe a duty to the public, but you owe a greater to yourself and to your families; and you'd much rather take ten shillings to the pound, than see me, even if I were guilty, dangling at your expense in any devil's larder in the country.'"

"Well, sir, the creditors waited."

"They did; but the deuce a bit did he pay them. He got what money he could together, as soon as he was married, and left them, as well as his wife, in the lurch. They have now sent me up the bills, as there's no hope of his paying them, and begged me to get hold of him if I can. They say he has been seen in London without his whiskers; and that, in a few days, they hope to afford me some clue to his present haunts. They refer me to his wife for a description of his person, which I mean to get of her at our next interview, if I can persuade the woman to be calm enough to give it me."

"What is her name?"

"Tonks."

"Then I am right in my suspicions."

"To what do you allude?"

"Mr. Burdock," said Blennerhagen, "I will not scruple to confess that I know the man, Tainted as his character now is, he has been worthy of esteem. Once in his life, sir, he did me so essential a service—greatly to his own detriment—that I have ever since groaned under the obligation; and never, until this moment, did I entertain a hope of being able to relieve myself from its weight."

"This is very odd," said the attorney; "but I am resolved not to be amazed. And, pray, on what do your hopes to help him rest?"

"On my interest with you."

"That is not worth a button; and, if it were, I don't see how you could benefit the man. Professional pursuits have not altogether destroyed my feelings; but I don't think that I should repent having been instrumental in bringing such a villain as this to justice."

"Do not let us be too hasty in consigning a man to infamy," replied Blennerhagen. "Circumstances are often powerful palliatives of guilt; and circumstances, you know, are not always—are they ever—under our control? Offences, which, abstractedly considered, appear heinous, would lose much of their odium, were we in possession of the whole chain of consequences, from the first inducement to commit crime, to its final consummation; and it would be but common charity to hope that such may have been the case in the present instance. I stand excused, at least, I trust, for endeavouring to evince my gratitude to this man."

"How can you possibly do so?"

"By procuring the destruction of those bills."

"What did you say?"

"Destroy those acceptances in my presence, and do me a trifling favour, which I shall presently mention—understanding, of course, that you will solemnly assure me I have not been injured—and the events of this morning shall be buried in oblivion."

"Why, I really thought you had more sense than to make so absurd a proposal," said the attorney; "how am I to account to my clients for the loss of their papers?"

"Oh! every one knows that man is fallible, and may mislay things: clerks, too, who have access to an attorney's private room, are poor, and open to temptation: laundresses frequently sweep valuable documents off the floor and burn them: even iron chests are not impregnable; and robberies take place in spite of every precaution."

"I certainly never met with your equal, Blennerhagen, and I'll tell you a piece of my mind presently; something has just struck me."

"I'll hear you with pleasure; but let us dispose of this little matter at once: hand me over the bills, pay the woman what she wants, and send her back into the country to-morrow morning. Tonks has many excuses for his conduct, with which, however, it is needless to trouble you. He has acted improperly—I will even say criminally; but I cannot let this opportunity escape of balancing our obligations. I shall feel much

more easy after it. I must, therefore, press you to oblige me."

"You stated, just now, that you had some other little favour to ask."

"Had we not better settle this affair first? My plan is always to clear away as I proceed."

"I, on the contrary, when any arrangement is contemplated between parties, like to bring every point into hotch-pot; as a preliminary step."

"Say no more, Mr. Burdock; I will yield with pleasure. It is rather a disagreeable subject on which I am compelled to touch; but I will go into it at once. Wyburn's wife has been with you to-day: she stated something to my disadvantage."

"What induces you to suppose so?"

"To be candid, your threats this morning aroused my suspicions. I have since seen Mrs. Wyburn, and extracted the facts from her."

"What facts?"

"*Imprimis*—that she has visited you to-day."

"Granted."

"*Item*—that she has thrown out hints which, if founded in truth, would not, perhaps, tend materially to the enhancement of my reputation."

"I shall say nothing on that subject."

"Can you deny it? If I am wrong, why not deny it? Will you deny it?"

"No, I won't."

"Then it is as I imagined. Now, sir, as you are kindly disposed towards my friend, I wish to warn you, seriously, against that young woman. She labours under gross delusions: an idea has entered her head, that I am her husband's enemy, and an admirer of her person. Nothing can be more preposterous. She has reproached me, bitterly, for every step that I have taken to benefit George Wyburn, under the impression that my proceedings would be prejudicial to him. I acquit her of malice; but she certainly is very deficient in common sense. Perhaps, however, I am uncharitable in saying this; for women, in her sphere of life, are totally incapable of forming a just opinion on the actions of men in mere matters of business. They are like those spectators of a chess-match, who, having obtained only a slight glimmering of the mysteries of the game, consider those moves of a piece which are, in fact, master-strokes of skill, as tending to bring the king into check-mate."

"You are a chess-player, I presume, Mr. Blennerhagen," said Burdock.

"I am, sir; chess is my favourite game. But to proceed with my statement: George Wyburn himself is by no means a man of business. Proud, and ridiculously affecting independence, although he scarcely possesses a shilling, he would disdain the slightest favour I could offer him: he will not willingly be under any obligation to any man. That assistance, which in extremity he might accept from a stranger, he would scorn if proffered by a friend. I am, therefore, under the necessity of acting in the most circuitous manner, to benefit him. If I do good, in my office as his friend, I must do so by stealth. Mrs. Wyburn

has not mind enough to perceive this: a combination of manoeuvres is to her mysterious, and, consequently, fearful; for she cannot imagine how any thing can be fair that is not manifest to her limited capacity. Now, sir, I have already made considerable progress in relieving my friend from his difficulties; and I do not wish to be thwarted, either by this woman's weakness, her whims, or her delusions. I can convince you, at once, of the honesty of my intentions; and I call on you, as at least a well-wisher to George Wyburn, not to countenance his wife's follies, but to put on the wisdom of the adder, and be deaf to her tales; in fact, not to bring yourself into trouble, by becoming the confidant of another man's wife, and her abettor, without his knowledge, in counteracting such measures as his best friend may think fit to adopt for his ultimate, if not immediate, benefit. I am urged to make this communication; I do it unwillingly, but I think you will feel that I am right."

"And this is your request, Mr. Blennerhagen?"

"It is."

"Have you any thing else to ask?"

"Absolutely nothing: I require nothing but your promise on this point."

"And the bills—"

"Oh! of course the bills: your promise and the bills."

"You have omitted to prove to me the honesty of your intentions towards Mr. Wyburn."

"I will do so in a few words. Although piqued at George for not immediately acquainting me with the circumstance of his being arrested, the moment I quitted you this morning, I flew to his creditors, and procured his instant release, by becoming security for payment of the bonds on which he had been arrested. You, doubtless, have ascertained that he is discharged; if not, you may do so at once, by sending one of your clerks to the lock-up house. This, you must allow, is a tolerably good proof of my intentions towards him. You will understand, that I do not wish him to know how far I have gone, as it would be needless, at present, to hurt his pride. We should reverence a friend's feelings, although, to our minds, they may appear failings. You are now convinced, I hope."

"I am!" exclaimed Burdock, with unusual energy; "I am convinced that you are an atrocious scoundrel! Don't frown, or pretend to be in a passion, or I'll show you no mercy. You're check-mated, Blennerhagen."

"Mr. Burdock! what's the matter? What has possessed you?"

"A spirit to put out and amove such a monster as you are from honest society. To dumbfounder you, if it be possible, without more ado, know that I am fully acquainted with the contents of the note you wrote in my presence this morning. 'Gillard—I must change my plans—let Wyburn be instantly released—contrive that he shall suspect he owes his liberty to my having become security for his debts—Blennerhagen.' I have the words, you hear, by heart; and what's

better, for my purpose, I have them in your own hand-writing, in my iron chest. I tore off the impression which you made with the note on your blotting-paper. Now, sir, what say you?"

"Nothing," replied the Mathematician, with his ordinary composure of manner; "nothing, but that I shall be under the necessity of entering into a longer explanation than I could wish at this moment, in order to clear up the circumstance."

"I will hear no more of your plausible explanations: I have heard enough already. It is time for me to speak."

"With all my heart."

"Where is the letter which George Wyburn wrote to you? that letter in which he stated he was about to destroy himself? Be brief in your reply: where is it?"

"Burned."

"Tis false! I must be explicit: you showed it to Mrs. Wyburn very lately—say within these two days."

"I beg to suggest, that before you give me the lie, (I postpone the insult for a moment,) you should have reflected that even in two days there is time enough to burn ten thousand letters, and that I have not been deprived of volition during that period."

"Admitted, but I know more than you imagine; and I will not be trifled with. You deem it to be so valuable a document, that you commonly have it about your person. Allow me merely to run my eye through your pocket-book."

"You carry this with too high a hand, Mr. Burdock," said Blennerhagen; "you ask too much, sir; and in a manner, that one who possessed less calmness than myself, would not tolerate. I am not to be intimidated. It would be as well, perhaps, if we postponed this discussion, until you are in a cooler mood."

"Not yet, sir; not yet, if you please. I have something more serious to say."

"You are not going to unmask a battery on me, I hope," said Blennerhagen, with apparent gayety.

"It may be that I am. Hear me; I hope I shall be forgiven if I am wrong: should I, however, be in error, a few hours will set me right. I strongly suspect—I will not call you Blennerhagen, for I have little doubt but that—"

"Hold!" exclaimed Blennerhagen, placing his hand on Burdock's lips; "hold! I beseech, I entreat you. Before you utter another word, I demand, I implore the favour of being allowed to commune for a few moments with myself."

Burdock intimated his acquiescence by a nod to this request. Blennerhagen rose from his seat, and paced rapidly up and down the room. A multitude of thoughts seemed to be hurrying through his mind; and large drops of perspiration trickled unheeded from his brow. After a few moments had elapsed, he began to recover his composure, and resumed his chair.

"Mr. Burdock," said he, "I am grateful for this indulgence. It is, I believe, an established

principle, with professional men, that the confidential communications of a client should be held most sacred."

"So far as regards myself, and many whom I know, that is certainly the case," replied Burdock.

"Allow me to ask, for whom do you consider yourself concerned under the late Joshua Kesterton's will?"

"First, for the executors; next, for your wife and yourself; and, lastly, for Mrs. Wyburn and her husband."

"I have the honour to be your client up to this moment, I believe."

"Of course."

"Then, sir, I beg to acquaint you, in that character, that I am Tonks."

"You don't surprise me at all," said Burdock; "I thought as much, and was just going to tell you so."

"I hope I shall do myself no injury by confessing that I perceived you were; and availed myself of the opportunity of stating the fact, in order to obtain the benefit of your silence, and, allow me to add, your advice."

"Nay, nay," replied Burdock, "I really must decline advancing you."

"Well, be it so," said Blennerhagen; "I have sense enough to see that my only safety is in immediate flight. I have been careless in some minute points of my calculations, and my air-built castle topples about my ears; but I must not be overwhelmed by its ruins."

"Understand that I cannot assist you," said Burdock; understand that most positively. Here's a clear felony; at least, I'm afraid it would turn out so. And you see, (it has just occurred to me,) although you're my client under Kesterton's will, yet, as the bills have actually been transmitted to me—"

"I have heard you say, Mr. Burdock," interrupted Blennerhagen, "that while you were concerned for a man, you would never act against him."

"I admit it; but, you see, in a case of felony—"

"Allow me to go on: without my confidential communication, you would, at this moment, have nothing but conjectures to warrant you in calling me Tonks."

"I don't deny it."

"I am under your roof, too."

"Granted."

"Lastly—villain as you deem me, I am unfortunate as well as guilty. My actions have been culpable, I confess. Money, money, has been my object: I have been compelled to catch little fish, to bait my hooks for great ones. The woman who calls herself Tonks, (which is not my real name,) has been, unfortunately for herself, one of my victims. I wanted money, and I scrupled not at any scheme that appeared safe, to get it. The end sanctified the means. I have a father, Mr. Burdock, a grey-headed man, who has pined in prison during three miserable years: I am the wretched cause of his sufferings. He was convicted in large penalties, for offences against the

revenue, committed by me—by me, alone, Mr. Burdock. I attempted to bring the onus of the offence on myself, and to relieve him from the accusation; but justice, in this case, was blind, indeed. My father is in his cell, sir; but, although balked in my designs at present, yet still, while I have existence, in other scenes—in other lands, rather, for I am no longer safe here, I will wrestle with fortune, at all hazards, until I procure a sufficient sum to effect his release."

"Suppose for a change, as you have hitherto been unsuccessful, you were to adopt some honest course—I mean if you escape."

"Perhaps I may: guilt, however, is but comparative, and—"

"Well, enough of this. What have you to say to your attempt on the virtue of Mrs. Wyburn?"

"I was under the influence of a passion which I could not control."

"You'll be hung as sure as you're born, if you suffer yourself to be governed by such sophistry as you preach."

"I hope not," replied the Mathematician, "for it would break that old man's heart, who has no joy to support him in his captivity, but his joy as a father in me. If I had freed him, he must not have known how I obtained the means to do so."

"Another reason for your being honest," observed Burdock; "Make a beginning, and you'll find the path pleasant afterwards: only make a beginning."

"I will, immediately," replied Blennerhagen, taking several papers from his pocket-book, and laying them upon the attorney's table: "there is George Wyburn's letter," added he; "and there are the bonds on which he has been arrested. Hush! Was not that a knock at the door of your chambers?"

Voices were now heard in the outer office; and, in a short time, Burdock's clerk came into the room to announce the arrival of Mrs. Blennerhagen and Mrs. Tonks.

"My second wife, doubtless, obtained her predecessor's address this morning," said Blennerhagen, "and has been to fetch her. Come in and shut the door, young man," continued he, addressing the clerk; "I think I heard you close your shutters just now; how many candles have you on your desk?"

"Only one, sir," replied the clerk, "at this moment."

"Oblige me by snuffing it out, apparently by accident, when you return to your seat, and utter some exclamation when you have done it: do not delay."

The clerk paused for a moment; but, as Burdock made no remark, the young man interpreted his silence as a tacit acquiescence to Blennerhagen's request, and withdrew. In a few seconds he gave the signal: Blennerhagen immediately strode out, rushed across the outer office, and effected his escape.

As soon as the clerk had procured a light, Burdock informed the ladies, in a few words, of Blennerhagen's villainies; and then left them,

weeping in each other's arms, to go in quest of Wyburn and his wife.

Within a week, the claims on Joshua Kesterton's estate were finally determined; and the amount proved to be so much less than either Hassell or Burdock had anticipated, as to leave a considerable sum, after deducting the legacy. Mrs. Blennerhagen—or, to speak more correctly, the widow Winpennie, not only paid poor Mrs. Tonks her full claim, but very generously augmented Wyburn's residue, by allowing a handsome deduction in his favour out of her ten thousand pounds. Neither of his wives ever heard of the Mathematician again; and, to quote a facetious entry to the old attorney's private memorandum-book, George Wyburn was convinced of the folly of his conduct:

He thought no more of reading Plato,
And acting like that goose, old Cato.